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ABSTRACT

This project used as an individualized model in the training of specialists in educational change. The individualized education approach consists of planning and conducting, with each student, general programs of study and day-to-day lessons that are tailor-made to suit his learning needs and characteristics. The rationale for using an individualized model was that each trainee brought a unique set of experiences and educational competencies to the training situation. In addition, although every participant expressed a commitment to constructive educational change, each differed in approach to change and views of education. Systematic provisions were made for taking account of the needs and learner characteristics of individual trainees throughout the entire process from recruitment and selection through program planning, personal/social counseling, planning and monitoring on-the-job experiences, job placement and follow-up. Data were collected in the form of academic records, tests, reports of training and job performance, observations, and interview protocols. All of these forms of data were employed in the educational guidance of the project. (BW/Author)

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RESEARCH TRAINING THROUGH A MULTIPLE SYSTEM CONSORTIUM: SIX PAPERS

1. The Pittsburgh-Based Project to Train Educational R&D Personnel. Glen Heathers

2. Methodological and Theoretical Bases for Designing Local Educational Change Programs. J. Todd Simonds and Theodora St. Lawrence

3. Making Local Change Programs Relevant to Students' Needs. John L. Morgan and Alfonzo Washington

4. The Design of Programs to Train Personnel to Develop and Conduct Programs of Local Change. Robert F. Nicely, Jr.

5. Individualizing Guidance and Training of Local Change Specialists. Hiawatha Fountain

6. Evaluation of Programs to Train Educational R&D Personnel. Jane P. Woodward and John L. Yeager

Learning Research and Development Center
University of Pittsburgh

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INDIVIDUALIZING GUIDANCE AND TRAINING OF LOCAL CHANGE SPECIALISTS

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April, 1972

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INDIVIDUALIZING GUIDANCE AND TRAINING OF LOCAL CHANGE SPECIALISTS

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In attempting to operationalize the concept of individualizing the training of local change specialists, it is important to define the term, "individualized instruction." Glen Heathers, University of Pittsburgh, Learning Research and Development Center, in a paper presented at the 1971 AERA Annual Meeting, suggested the following definition: "Individualized education refers to any procedure used to ensure that the individual student receives instruction that is specifically appropriate for him." He continues, "Individualized education consists of planning and conducting, with each student, general programs of study and day-to-day lessons that are tailor-made to suit his learning needs and his characteristics as a learner."

Why an individualized model of training? In viewing the background of the students, we noted that in spite of their similar job titles and descriptions, each trainee brought a unique set of experiences and educational competencies. For example, candidates for Program 3A (short-term change program) came from so-called "establishment" organizations. Participants included a school superintendent, a county education planner, a vice-principal, a state Board of Education director, four persons from a state Department of Education, and two persons from an R&D center. Each participant expressed a commitment to constructive educational change, but differed in approach to change and views of education.

The students in Program 3A are persons who could be classified as working in the system. On the other hand, Program 3B (short-term change program for persons

employed in community action agencies) is made up of persons who, in the main, work on the system. Though the students in 3B are all Black, they bring to the program a variety of views, some similar and others not so similar to those brought by participants in Program 3A. They, too, come from a variety of educational backgrounds and job experiences. Jobs held by Program 3B participants include such positions as: Director of Educational Planning at Model Cities; Director of Education Programs at the local OEO agency; Assistant Director of Education for the local Urban League; School-Community Agent for the Pittsburgh Public Schools; Chairman of the Education Committee of the NAACP; Consultant-in-Training in the Model Cities Education Division; and Detached Worker in the YMCA program. These students ranged in formal education from high school graduates to doctoral candidates. The backgrounds of the participants in the long-term program are just as varied as those in the short-term programs, except that all the participants have at least a baccalaureate degrees and two years experience in the area of educational change.

If a training program is to be effective, systematic provisions have to be made for taking account of the needs and learner characteristics of individual trainees throughout the entire process from recruitment and selection through program planning, personal/social counseling, planning and monitoring on-the-job experiences, job placement and follow-up. "Educational guidance" is the term used in this project to refer to such provisions for individualizing training. Educational guidance includes special attention to assessing and strengthening the trainee's personal social qualities in relation to his job. Such qualities are difficult to monitor in usual training contexts; personal counseling interviews are appropriate for helping the trainee in the personal/social area. The educational guidance specialist tries to create an environment which allows the trainee to maximize his learning potential.

The educational guidance specialist should be competent in the skills and techniques of counseling and group dynamics and should be thoroughly familiar with the goals and objectives of the training program. The guidance specialist was assigned responsibility for coordinating the various training experiences of each trainee as they involved other members of the training staff and members of employing agencies. The specialist had a particular responsibility for relating to the trainee as a person, discovering the trainee's views and attitudes toward the training program as well as his personal concerns as they influenced his responsiveness to the program. This feedback was channeled to the instructional decision makers to assist them in individually tailoring the program to meet the needs of each student. For example, if a student was dissatisfied with a particular method of teaching, or with the unit content, he would tell the guidance specialist, who would pass this information on to the instructor. In such instances, the instructor would meet with the student to decide alternative strategies toward reconciling the needs of the student and the requirements of the program.

The conduct of the educational guidance function also called for employing appropriate data-gathering procedures for a case-study approach to training. Data were collected in the form of academic records, tests, reports and ratings of training and job performance, observations, and interview protocols. All of these forms of data were employed in the educational guidance component of the project. The case study material was helpful in deciding whether a student might be exempted from units on the basis of pre-existing competencies and job needs. For example, one unit of the program dealt with the "Educational Reform Movement." One student said: "This is repetitious. It is something that I don't need. I've had enough history of education. I've exhibited competencies in this area."

Knowing from his case study that he already held a Ph.D. and was indeed competent in this area, he was granted permission to work on another project more important to him. Another student with a high school diploma had no need of the unit dealing with "Community Involvement in Education Since 1954." In reviewing his case study we learned that he was 30, very active in the community and had served on many education committees. After a brief discussion with him about the objectives of that unit, the student, the educational guidance specialist, and the instructor agreed that this student could work on another project more important to him.

The guidance component also contributed when four students from the short-term programs enrolled in a doctoral program in Curriculum and Supervision. These students had done some doctoral study at other universities. The guidance specialist was able to work with the students and department representatives to design academic programs which took full account of the varying needs and competencies of each student.

Trainee recruitment. Individualized educational guidance within the training project began with the recruitment of trainee candidates from appropriate agencies. Two types of trainee candidates were recruited: (a) short-term trainees who would participate in a six-week certificate program; and (b) long-term trainees who would participate in a sixth-year specialist diploma program, or a two- to three-year doctoral program. The degree would be a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in Curriculum and Supervision with a specialization in local educational change. With the short-term program to train local change specialists, recruitment focused on agencies that employ such persons--state departments of education, educational R&D centers and laboratories, and community action organizations (such as Urban Leagues, NAACP's, Model Cities programs, and local OEO offices concerned with

school improvement and constructive educational change). With the long-term program to train specialists in the design and conduct of local educational change programs, recruitment required advertising the program nationally to education-related institutions and agencies to attract individuals having high potential for leadership in educational change and desiring advanced training. Successful attempts were made to attract male and female trainees from a variety of geographical locations and ethnic backgrounds.

Trainee selection. Trainee selection for the short-term programs was conducted jointly by employers and the project staff. The task was to choose trainees whose entering knowledge, competencies, and personal/social qualities, combined with evidence of their probable responsiveness to training, promised that they would achieve the objectives of the training program. Employers' selection criteria included the above, together with judgments about the importance of the candidates' contributions to local change, probable increments in job effectiveness resulting from the training program, and feasibility of releasing the employee for six weeks of full-time training with pay.

Selection for long-term programs to train local change specialists was based on academic and work-history data, evidence of a career commitment to improving education, and evidence of possessing personal/social qualities that would enable the trainee to provide leadership for change in various organizational and interpersonal contexts.

Individual program planning. A major feature of educational guidance was working out with each trainee individualized provisions for his accomplishing training objectives, with some objectives being selected to meet the trainee's special needs or interests. The trainee's progress through the academic part of the program was monitored on a unit-by-unit basis with individual conferences

held at the request of the trainee or a staff instructor. In addition, each trainee in the short-term program was responsible for an individual project; this project was selected by the trainee, and usually dealt with a specific problem encountered by the trainee on his job.

If a trainee lacked certain prerequisites, special training tasks were set to overcome those shortcomings. For example, when a student or group of students could not understand class material, the instructor would offer individual and group sessions explaining the material in a simpler way and at greater length. Program planning also took into account the trainee's preferred ways of learning in various individual or interpersonal contexts. For example, many of the lectures were taped; there were handouts and reading references which students could use for individual study. Students also were encouraged to request individual sessions with the instructors.

Planning and monitoring on-the-job experiences. Training sessions were scheduled in three segments of three weeks, two weeks, and one week, with intervals of four to eight weeks between segments. The educational guidance specialist played the chief role in providing a tie-in between the training program and the trainee's job during these intervals between training sessions. Trainees were provided with procedures and forms for use in examining and reporting the relation between training and the job. Also, the trainee's supervisors were asked to examine how the training program related to the trainees' work and to report findings to the project staff. This process called for frequent field visits by the educational guidance specialist.

Practicum and internship planning and monitoring. With the long-term program, the specialist is locating and arranging practicum and internship experiences for each of the trainees. After a trimester of study and class work, the trainees

spend a major part of their time in practicums where they study on-going innovative programs and processes under the direction of the guidance specialist and project staff.

For the internship, it is necessary to find for each trainee appropriate full-time work situations where the trainee can apply and strengthen competencies developed during the foundation year. The internships will be supervised by a project staff member and an employer representative jointly. For doctoral students, internships must permit the conducting of a major project in instructional development to satisfy dissertation requirements.

Job placement and follow-up. Students in the long-term program require guidance in obtaining jobs using their training. This calls for the guidance specialist to establish working relationships with such organizations as state education departments, educational R&D centers and laboratories, and school systems. The guidance specialist will help program graduates find appropraite positions, then conduct a follow-up check the success of the placement.